

AGENDA ITEM V E 1

PROGRESS REPORT ON CONDITIONALLY APPROVED PROGRAM

NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY

B.S. IN MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY (MET)

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Board of Regents granted conditional approval for the Manufacturing Engineering Technology (MET) program at Nicholls State University in March 2000 stipulating that the institution would submit annual progress reports detailing efforts toward ABET (Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology) accreditation. By 2003, the program encountered problems surrounding resources needed to attain program accreditation, limited enrollment, less-than-acceptable graduation rates. For the next couple of years, the program languished. In late 2005, the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Nicholls and Board of Regents's staff agreed that the program should be terminated. The University requested, and the Board approved, program termination in January 2006..

Shortly thereafter in June 2006, the University and the University of Louisiana System petitioned the Board of Regents to reconsider program termination. The institution indicated that there was renewed support from local industry for the program and the need for program graduates existed statewide. The institution requested continuation of the program for a period of three years, during which time it intended to achieve professional accreditation. In August 2006, the Board acted as follows:

The Board of Regents hereby suspends its action of January 2006 terminating the B.S. program in Manufacturing Engineering Technology at Nicholls State University, pending the report of a consultant from ABET-TAC and the University's response to that report. The University shall engage the services of the aforementioned consultant in time for a Fall 2006 visit to the campus. The consultant's report and accompanying University response shall be due to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs by December 15, 2006.

The consultant visited the University in late 2006 and concluded, in essence, that the program could be accredited within two years by the Technology Accreditation Committee (TAC) of ABET pending the institutional response to his recommendations. In March 2007, the institution's response to the consultant's recommendations along with a timeline for achieving accreditation were presented to the Board of Regents. The Board acted as follows:

Continued conditional approval is granted for the B.S. in Manufacturing Engineering Technology program at Nicholls State University through January 1, 2010. By that date, a final report documenting attainment of ABET-TAC accreditation for this program shall be submitted to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs. Also, beginning August 31, 2007, and each year thereafter until further Board action, the institution shall submit to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs a progress report documenting numbers of program enrollees and graduates and employment placement of these graduates.

The University submitted the requested progress report in August 2007 addressing enrollment/graduation projections, accreditation issues, and faculty resources. Subsequently, at its September 2007 meeting, the Board acted as follows:

The Board of Regents receives the AY 2006-2007 Program Report from Nicholls State University Relative to Implementation of the B.S. Program in Manufacturing Engineering Technology. A copy of the institution's assessment/evaluation relative to ABET accreditation and copies of any subsequent communication between the University and ABET concerning program accreditation shall be forwarded to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs in a timely fashion.

The University submitted another progress report (dated July 1, 2008) addressing issues outlined in the Staff Summary section below.

STAFF ANALYSIS

1. Enrollment/Graduation Projections

Number of graduates and graduation projections for this program were provided by the institution:

<u>Semester</u>	<u># of Graduates</u>	<u>Projected # of Graduates</u>
Fall 2006	4	
Spring 2007	7	
Fall 2007	0*	
Spring 2008	4	
Fall 2008		3
Spring 2009		2
Fall 2009		5
Spring 2010		3-4

** Number of graduates affected by program termination.*

With regard to recent graduates, the University reports the following:

The most recent graduates had starting salaries of between \$50,000 and \$55,000 per year. Of the thirty four graduates, one was working on an M.S. in Mathematics at last contact, one is continuing at Nicholls to complete a second B.S. degree in Geomatics, and

one has not responded to requests for information since he graduated. The others have reported salaries ranging from \$40,000 to \$150,000 per year.

2. Accreditation

The University reported the following with regard to its schedule for achieving ABET accreditation:

The program faculty has been working on the ABET self-study for the past several months and it has been submitted on a timely basis. A copy of the self-study report will be sent to the Board of Regents staff shortly. The site visit has been scheduled for November 16-18, 2008, and the visit will be by a Team Leader and two Program Evaluators (PEV). The Team Leader is Dr. Swaminat Balachandran, a Professor of Industrial Engineering in the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, and PEVs are Dr. Stanley N. Ihekweazu, Chair of the Department of Civil and Mechanical Engineering at South Carolina State University, and Dr. Walter W. Buchanan, Professor and Department Head, Texas A&M University.

Following the site visit this fall, the remaining events are scheduled:

Jan – Feb 2009 – Preliminary findings/recommendations of team edited and sent to institution.

Mar – April 2009 – Institution responds to preliminary findings/recommendations within 30 days of receipt.

May – June 2009 – Final changes made to the draft report; based on institutional response. Statement (final recommendations) finalized.

July 2009 – Annual Summer Commission Meeting is held to determine final actions.

Aug 2009 – Institution notified of final actions. The institution will notify the Board of Regents of final actions no later than January 1, 2010.

3. Faculty Resources

The University reports the following with regard to faculty resources:

At present, the program utilizes two full-time faculty members in the MET program: Dr. George W. Watt, Program Director, and Dr. Henry Foust. In order to make time available to do the recruiting and TAC/ABET Self Study, the department has acquired two adjunct professors who teach one class per semester. They are Mark Dennis (M.S. in Civil Engineering) who teaches Statics and Strength of Materials, and Clyde Foust (B.S. in Petroleum Engineering) who teaches Engineering Economics and the capstone course. One of the program's industry partners provides \$5,000 per year to help pay for the adjunct faculty members.

STAFF SUMMARY

The staff remains concerned about the viability of this program and feels that continual monitoring by the Board of Regents is warranted. First, while graduation rates appear to be on the rebound, the time frame measured has been too brief to suggest sustained student interest . As such, the number of program enrollees and number of program graduates should continued to monitored. Second, the University has not yet submitted any documentation relative to its ABET/TAC accreditation application. Given that there is an accreditation site visit scheduled for November, the staff is surprised that self-review materials are not yet complete. The staff reiterates the need for copies of all accreditation materials submitted to ABET and/or received by ABET both before and after the on-site visit. Lastly, staff remains concerned about faculty resources dedicated to this program. For the past few years, such resources have remained stagnant; the University has been alerted by staff in the past that this concern could possibly be an accreditation issue. Ultimately, ABET/TAC's accreditation visit this fall will clearly resolve whether or not current faculty resources are adequate or not.

Given these unresolved issues, the staff tenders the following recommendation:

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee receive the AY 2007-2008 Progress Report from Nicholls State University Relative to Implementation of the B.S. Program in Manufacturing Engineering Technology. By February 1, 2009, the University shall submit a progress report to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs addressing the following:

- 1. The actual and projected numbers of AY 2008-2009 program enrollees/graduates and placement of these graduates; and***
- 2. A summary of ABET/TAC accreditation progress , along with copy of all related communication to and from ABET and Nicholls regarding this matter.***